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News Release

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Rice man pleads guilty to child pornography production charges

A 32-year-old Rice man pleaded guilty today in federal court to producing child pornography.

Michael Ray Tobiassen pleaded guilty to one count of production of child pornography Sept. 19 in Minneapolis. He entered his plea before United States District Court Judge Ann Montgomery. Tobiassen was indicted on June 16.

According to Tobiassen's plea agreement, in March 2008 he met a 13-year-old girl through the Internet, and on March 29, he convinced her to sneak out of her parents' house and meet him. Tobiassen admitted that he took the girl to a park and took pictures of her engaging in sexually explicit conduct.

Tobiassen faces a potential maximum penalty of 30 years in prison. Judge Montgomery will determine Tobiassen's sentence at a future date. This case is the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Sherburne County Sheriff's Office, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys William J. Otteson and Erica H. MacDonald.

This case is part of Project Safe Childhood (PSC), a national initiative that encourages the use of multi-jurisdictional task forces to investigate and prosecute cases that involve the sexual exploitation of children over the Internet. PSC urges that law enforcement efforts be complemented by community-wide campaigns to assist victims of exploitation and to educate parents, other adults, and children about Internet safety.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, one in 33 children receives an unwanted sexual solicitation online each year. One in four children experiences unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material on the Internet each year. And, more than 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the Internet every week. Moreover, recent research conducted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons indicates a strong correlation between possessing or distributing child pornography and committing sexual-contact crimes against children.

